Board of Supervisors Hearing Date: December 16, 2008
Case Summary: Project No. R2007-00801-(2) (Conditional Use Permit)

Project Applicant: Park Water Company

RPC Hearing Date: September 24, 2008
RPC Consent Approval Date: September 24, 2008

Synopsis

The applicant has received approval from the Regional Planning Commission for a request to authorize to construct a 780 foot deep water well serving Compton and Willowbrook areas with a pump house, a salt chlorine and seepage for water discharge and a 80 foot Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) communication tower to continuously control devises, monitor, notify and record activities occurring at Park Water company's active sites in the Compton/Willowbrook area.

Park Water Company obtained a Conditional Use Permit for the construction of a 2 million gallon water reservoir in 1965. The proposed SCADA consists of electronic monitoring, controlling and recording of data of all active PWC groundwater wells, reservoirs and purchase water connections. PWC installed the SCADA system in 1997 and has been using phone lines to communicate between different sites. However, PWC encountered several communication failures since 1997 related to weather and phone line issues. Therefore, PWC has determined to use radio signal technology through SCADA that will also serve to meet Homeland Security requirements to assure safe and reliable communication and data transmission.

The new system will have two 80 foot high towers with two radio antennas mounted on the top, one already installed at the headquarters office in Downey at 9750 Washburn Road in Downey, CA 90241 and the other tower will be installed at reservoir 19B on the subject property. The existing other two facilities in southeast Los Angeles monitored by this system are the Compton West Water System, and Bellflower/Norwalk water system. Both sites will be monitored and controlled through local computers that are connected to the main office in Downey. In the event of an alarm the computerized systems notify the 24/7 control center operator and on call operators. The radio frequency of SCADA will be 5.8 GHz and a wireless tower model HD-80 will be installed. The tower would be 5'-6" in diameter and cast in a concrete foundation 14 feet below ground and bolted to the 80 feet high tower. The tower is self supporting and the radio equipment mounted on the top will provide the necessary communication with other sites.

According to the applicant the proposed system is cost effective and it does not incur the high cost of maintaining the digital telephone lines of about $21,000 per month and meets California Utility Commission requirement of providing low a cost facility with less financial impact on customer rates.

The subject property is located at 1743 E 118th Street in the Willowbrook-Entrerprise Zoned District. The property is located within the Willowbrook Community Standards District and the Willowbrook Redevelopment Area. Access to the property is from 118th Street.

Project Proponents

The project received support from the Community Development Commission, the lead agency for the Redevelopment area.

Project Opposition

Staff received opposition to the project from Charles Drew University at the public hearing on September 24, 2008.

Issues

Opponents to this project have raised the following concerns:

- Charles Drew University was not notified of the public hearing and never received information regarding the proposed project until two days prior to the hearing when they saw the notice posted on the subject property.
- That additional time to be granted to look into more alternatives to replace the tower technology.
- The Commission failed to provide notice of the public hearing to Charles Drew University by mailing the notice to 1621 E 120th Street while the address for the University is 1731 120th Street in Los Angeles. Also, the Commission failed to advertise the notice of public hearing in the newspaper as required by the Code.
- The notice of public hearing was incorrectly sent to the owner of "Imperial Highway Apartments," the adjacent property to the subject property.
- The proposed tower will have a negative visual impact. It will create an urban blight appearance and will adversely affect the view of the surrounding lots owned by Charles Drew University.
- The tower presents safety issues during an earthquake, winds and other attacks and has an environmental impact, while no studies have been conducted to prevent potential harm.
- The proposed tower will have an impact on property values and revenues at Charles Drew University.
- The applicant's burden of proof contains inaccurate information.

The issues raised by the opposition were addressed by the appeal and the Regional Planning Commission never had a chance to hear those concerns.

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